**FXHIBIT NO.** 

City of Alexandria, Virginia

## **MEMORANDUM**

DATE:

**DECEMBER 4, 2003** 

TO:

THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM:

PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT:

VISITORS CENTER STUDY

**ISSUE**: Findings from visitors center consultant study and public process.

**RECOMMENDATION**: That City Council receive this report and the following recommendations and docket the report for public hearing on Saturday, January 24, and consideration on Tuesday, January 27:

remove the Market Square and the expanded Ramsay House Visitors Center options from (1) further consideration;

maximize the benefit of Ramsay House for visitors by improving its interior (2)

programming of space;

pursue initiatives regarding improved signage, marketing, kiosks, parking, tour bus (3) management, and a new King Street Metrorail station visitor information area; and

not pursue the leasing of a retail site in the Market Square area at this time. **(4)** 

BACKGROUND: Over the past decade the City has considered alternative locations for its current visitors center located at 221 King Street in Ramsay House. In order to determine if a new visitors center was needed and, if so, where it should be located, the City retained expert consultants in the area of tourism development and promotion to conduct a thorough and independent study of the needs of the City. In April of 2003 Council held a work session with the consultant (Parter International), and in June Council received the staff report and the consultant's full report, which made recommendations for improving the quality of Alexandria's visitors' experience. The report recommends that the City build a new, expanded visitors center, and recommends as the preferred locations either an expanded Ramsay House or a new building on Market Square. The Parter report also recommends, regardless of whether or not there is a new visitors center, that the City make improvements to signage, tourist information, parking, and transit and tour bus management associated with the primary tourist areas in Old Town.

Last June City Council asked staff to study the sites and scenarios recommended by the consultant and to bring the consultant's report and site options before the public in a review process, in order to ensure that citizens were informed of the Parter recommendations and had sufficient opportunity for input. The Department of Planning & Zoning facilitated a series of public review sessions during September through November of this year. Attachment 1 contains a list of invitees to these sessions; Attachment 2 contains the findings which resulted from the public review process and staff analysis.

CONCLUSION: City residents and business owners have many opinions on a new visitors center, some of which differ from those of the expert consultants who see Alexandria from a visitor-centric point of view. As a result, what may work best as a visitors center may not work best from a wider community perspective. On the other hand, the consultant provided important information to the City, its staff, residents and businesses about the dynamics of an effective visitors center, provided sound reasons why visitors center locations outside of the visitors domain would not be a wise City investment, and identified key strategies which could strengthen the visitor experience in Alexandria.

Considering the consultant's analysis and recommendations, the opinions of the community members who participated in the community process, the fiscal impact and costs of a visitors center (Attachment 3), and the City's fiscal outlook over the next five to ten years and the many other areas competing for City resources, staff recommends the following:

- a new visitors center *not* be placed on Market Square;
- Ramsay House not be expanded because of the resulting loss of open space;
- Ramsay House, because it is so well located, be reviewed to maximize the visitor experience there by improving its interior programming of space;
- staff, in conjunction with ACVA, pursue the non-center focused consultant recommendations regarding improved signage, marketing, kiosks, parking and tour bus management, and a King Street Metrorail station visitor information area; and
- the leasing of a retail site in the Market Square area for a visitors center not be pursued at this time, but remain as an option for future consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT: For any option chosen by Council, staff will need to develop more specific proposals with detailed costs for final Council determination before the option is implemented. The FY 2005 operating and capital budget process would best serve as the appropriate venue for Council to consider the further tourism investments recommended above. Attachment 3 discusses the economic and fiscal impact of a visitors center in more detail.

## ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1. List of community groups invited to participate in Visitors Center Report discussions
- Attachment 2. Visitors Center Study Public Process Findings
- Attachment 3. Fiscal Analysis Discussion
- Attachment 4. Docket item, June 5, 2003, which details the findings of the Visitors Center Consultant Report (includes consultant's Executive Summary and PowerPoint presentation)

## **STAFF**:

Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager
Barbara Ross, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning
Tom Luebke, City Architect, Planning and Zoning

## Visitor Center StudyMeetings/Presentations

Group(ŝ)	Date/Time	Where
-Planning Commission-	September 4 <sup>th</sup> -7:30 p.m. (at the end of the regular meeting)	City Hall, Council Chambers
-Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP)	September 24th-4:00 p.m.	AEDP Board Room
-King Street Metro Enterprise Team -Upper King Street Neighborhood Association -Old Town Business Association -Alexandria Chamber of Commerce -Inner City Civic Association	September 24 <sup>th</sup> -7:30 p.m.	City Hall, Room 2000 (consultant presentation)
-ACVA Board - Lunch meeting	September 25 <sup>th</sup> -11:30 a.m.	Holiday Inn, First St. (consultant presentation)
-Alexandria Federation of Civic AssnHistoric Alexandria Foundation -Alex. Restoration and Preservation Committee -Historic Alexandria Resources Commission -Collaboration Committee - Alexandria Historical Society - Alexandria Association	October 8 <sup>th</sup> -5:30 p.m.	City Hall, Room 2000 (consultant presentation)
-Old Town Civic Association	October 8 <sup>th</sup> -8:00 p.m.	The Lyceum (consultant presentation)
-BAR-Old and Historic District	October 15 <sup>th</sup> -7:30 p.m. (at end of regular mtg.)	City Hall, Council Chambers (staff)
-Parker Gray Board	October 22 <sup>nd</sup> -7:30 p.m.	City Hall, Council Chambers (staff)
-General Public meeting	October 23 <sup>rd</sup> -7:30 p.m.	City Hall, Room 2000 (consultant presentation)

## **Visitors Center Study Public Process Findings**

<u>Public Process Findings</u>. The public process sought to involve those representative organizations which are directly and indirectly associated with Old Town, the historic attractions, and with business and the tourist industry. Meetings were advertised and generally well attended. The meeting format was generally one of presentation of the consultant's recommendations, followed by questions, answers and general discussion. The following discussion summarizes the most important issues raised in the public meetings.

## 1. Disparate opinions about tourism generally

Participants in the discussions expressed a variety of sentiments regarding a new visitors center. On the one hand, there are those, typically some Old Town residents, who recommend that the City not promote tourism if it means additional people, cars and buses visiting Old Town and creating more activity. On the other, members of the historic preservation community, including members of the Boards of Architectural Review, believe that the City, because it maintains a national treasure in its historic districts, has an obligation to promote knowledge of and understanding of it, and to make it as available to others as possible. The business community is supportive of the goal of increasing tourism as a way to grow the City's economy and increase tax revenues generated from non-residents.

## 2. Need for a visitors center

The community meetings also revealed that there is not a clear consensus in the community on the need for a new or expanded visitors center, or what location would best be used for a new or expanded center. Where there is support for a visitors center, it is highest from economic development and tourist-oriented businesses. While many acknowledge the importance of tourism as contributing to the local economy, many participants in the process were concerned about the impact of tour buses and the tourists associated with them. With a few exceptions, most participants agreed with the consultant report's finding that the existing Ramsay House was inadequate in its current form. It was acknowledged that Ramsay House, with its small 400 square foot welcome, orientation and information area, and its accessability problems, does not adequately serve the City's tourists. A question was also raised about the accuracy of the statement that Ramsay House currently serves about 115,000 visitors per year. This 115,000, if anything, underreports visitors, as ACVA keeps a daily hand count, with visitors sometimes not all counted if the staff is busy serving them. ACVA then tallies the daily count into weekly, monthly and annual data.

## 3. Importance of Open Space

One clear message from the community relates to the value of open space. The consultants' two top recommendations for a new visitors center both involve losing existing open space. The proposed expansion of Ramsay House would require removing the small garden area between the current visitors center and the 219 Restaurant. Building a new structure on Market Square would remove at least one of the large landscaped areas framing the plaza that the public enjoys and expects to remain. Although there are some members of the public who are supportive of both of

these two site proposals, the great majority of people who gave an opinion felt that the loss of existing open space for a visitors center was not warranted.

## 4. Location for a visitors center

After reviewing many sites City-wide, the clusters of sites identified positively by the consultants were focused either on lower King Street in the vicinity of the existing Ramsay House, or on upper King Street at or near the King Street Metrorail station. The rationale for these two general areas is that for a city with Alexandria's attributes, a visitors center, to be successful, needs to be where the visitors are, and cannot be outside the visitor domain.

- a. Lower King Street. The consultant report favored the development of two lower King Street sites, Ramsay House and Market Square, as being the most positive options in terms of access, visibility, and location within the visitor domain. Probably the strongest amount of community support exists for the expansion of Ramsay House, although significant concerns were voiced about both the loss of open space and the compromise of what is rightly or wrongly considered Alexandria's oldest building. However, many in the historic community recognize that Ramsay House and its garden is not an historically accurate reproduction of prior structures on that site. The option to put the visitors center on Market Square was by far the most divisive alternative, with responses either highly positive (as an enhancement of the quality of the existing urban plaza) or highly negative (as the destruction of a civic space that is considered sacred). What emerged from the public process was that the development of either of these options runs counter to the community's strongly held values regarding the preservation of open space and civic landmarks.
- b. <u>Upper King Street</u>. Regarding the potential locations on upper King Street for a center, as upper King Street is not the heart of the visitor domain, there was little overt support for locating a full visitors center there, although it was the preferred option of some Old Town residents and some upper King Street businesses. Getting tourists who most often use Washington Street to enter the City, and who want to visit lower King Street sites, to go to an upper King Street visitors center is not likely. However, in recognition of the importance of transit-oriented tourists, there was virtually unanimous community support for developing a small satellite visitors information area or kiosk facility in association with the King Street Metrorail station. This idea remains a strong option, and City staff has discussed with WMATA staff the concept of using largely empty space within the station concourse or outside the station on WMATA property. While WMATA staff responded that it will only support use of its property outside the station building for a kiosk, further discussion between WMATA and the City is warranted to see if WMATA would be flexible about the interior use of the King Street Metrorail station space.

Based on the feedback from the public process, there is no one specific location for a new visitors center generally accepted in the Alexandria community. On the other hand, the prevailing opinion was to support the consultants' finding that the lower King Street area in the existing Ramsay House/Market Square area is the best location for a visitors center because that

area includes or is near the great majority of major tourist attractions and is the most visible. Given the lack of support for losing open space at Ramsay House or Market Square, several members of the public suggested that the City continue to look for a different location, including existing retail spaces.

## 5. Potential Other Locations

Two existing retail sites were reviewed because they are either already under City lease or will be vacated by their existing tenant in 2005 and might be viable locations for a store-front type visitors center, based on their size and location near the Ramsay House/Market Square area within the visitor realm, including:

- 401 King Street/Tavern Square (currently privately-leased)
- 132 North Royal Street/Tavern Square (currently City-leased)

These sites, and others that may become available, offer the advantage of being close to or facing King Street and are adjacent to or within one block of Market Square with all its advantages of access and visibility. Other retail sites near King and Union or on Lee Street were considered, but they would not be viable sites, as their location has significant drawbacks. Each of the two retail sites reviewed (401 King and 132 N. Royal) offer enough floor area to accommodate the program recommended for the visitors center (3,600 square feet) all on one level adjacent to the street. Furthermore, these spaces are available now or in the near future for lease and could be used for a limited period of time (five to seven years) on a trial basis to determine the effectiveness and viability of a larger visitors center for the City. While there are substantial costs of leasing (\$100,000 to \$200,000 per year) and outfitting space (\$500,000 to \$800,000) for this use, they can be considered in relationship to the sunk costs and longer schedule of planning for and building a new structure. The City's consultant has reviewed these sites, and believes that these two spaces, while a less effective location for a visitors center than Market Square or Ramsay House, could be successful visitors center sites. Although rental of space is less expensive in the short-term, it is more expensive in the long-term than new construction. However, that would be the tradeoff required in order to fully preserve the Market Square and Ramsay House open space.

## 6. Maximize the benefit of Ramsay House

While there are limitations which cannot be overcome given the physical constraints of Ramsay House, internal improvement in how the space is used is feasible. For example, using video and flat screen technology and/or computer technology, it would be possible to accomplish some of what an expanded visitors center could accomplish in regards to increased tourist information and orientation. Also, rethinking how the ancillary space of Ramsay House could be used may yield some enhancements worth pursuing.

## 7. Signage, Kiosks, and Marketing

There was close to unanimous support for a City study to create a comprehensive, coordinated City-wide signage system to assist visitors find their way along King Street and around Old Town. In follow up to the consultant recommendations this summer and fall, City staff have been working with staff from the Society for Environmental Graphic Design to learn about how

comprehensive sign programs work and also learn how to structure a proposed City-wide signage program. In September the City installed new simple temporary blue and white wayfinding signs along King Street. These signs have received strong positive feedback from visitors, residents and the business community, and thereby reinforced the consultant's recommendations about the benefits of a comprehensive City-wide improved signage program. At some point later in this fiscal year, and in coordination with the FY 2005 City budget process, staff will bring specific signage structure, process, cost and timetable recommendations forward for Council consideration. Kiosks at special locations, including near or inside the King Street Metrorail station, were also suggested, which could include maps and generalized information about historic attractions, restaurants and shopping opportunities. Installing an information desk (to be staffed during peak tourist months) inside the King Street Metrorail station is an idea also worth pursuing. Increased investment in marketing by ACVA is also a viable alternative way to increase tourism. Marketing can be targeted to specific audiences and geographic locations and can result in an increase in the number of visitors to Alexandria.

## 8. Parking, Traffic and Tour Buses

There was also near universal concern about parking and car and tour bus traffic management, and recommendations that the City create a more organized approach to directing visitors and tourism to specific locations so that they are not unnecessarily traveling or parking on City streets. While improved signage will address this issue to some degree, more active parking and tour bus management is desirable. In addition, suggestions were made about increasing the use of transit for visitors. In order to deal with parking, traffic and tour bus issues, it is recommended that ACVA and City staff begin to work out specific recommendations for community and Council consideration.

## Fiscal Impact of the New Visitors Center

While it would be ideal to be able to measure what the economic impact of tourism is in relation to the current Ramsay House Visitors Center (as well as any future visitors center alternative), the numerous variables which influence tourists and business travelers' decisions make this difficult to accomplish with the desirable degree of accuracy. The problem is in part due to the fact that tourism is generated from a number of sources such as guide books, news stories, advertising, marketing, word-of-mouth, hotel incentive packages, tour operator business plans, as well as the location of business meetings and conventions. In addition, tourism is influenced by changes in the national economy, social trends and preferences (such as the recent trend towards heritage and cultural tourism), as well as by external events (such as perceived terrorism threats).

As a result, a realistic, hard quantification of the impact of a visitors center is not feasible, according to the consultants hired for this study assignment. In the early parts of this study, staff pressed the consultants on this issue, and they indicated that developing quantitative measures would not be productive or reliable. While some firms and the tourism industry produce economic impact studies, one usually finds, when looking at the key variables used, that major subjective judgments have been quantified to create what appear to be objective results.

However, while measuring the economic impact of a new or expanded visitors center is difficult, one can project current City tax revenues directly related to tourism and then measure what a one percent increase in tourism tax revenues would be. One can then (a) determine the annualized costs of a new or expanded visitors center (operating costs plus amortizing capital or rental costs), (b) determine the percentage increase in tourism revenue necessary to equal these annualized costs, and (c) determine whether that percentage increase in tourism revenue meets a test of reasonableness.

- Each 1% increase in current tourism-related tax revenue equals about \$100,000. (This is based on estimated annual tourist-related tax revenue of \$10 million, which in turn is based on total annual tourist-related spending in Alexandria of about \$500 million.)
- Estimated annual new operating and amortized capital or rental costs of a visitors center is approximately \$200,000 to \$400,000 per year
- Therefore, it would take a 2% to 4% increase in tourism-related tax revenue to reach a breakeven point of revenues vs. expenditures.

As part of the Parter consulting team, the architectural firm of Powe Jones Associates estimated the construction costs of the Ramsay House renovation and expansion at \$1.6 million and the Market Square option at \$2.6 million. The City then retained a firm to review the options and verify the cost estimates, as well as to review the proposals for constuctability. The resulting cost estimates were not materially different than the Powe Jones estimates, and they concurred that the two plans were constructable. It is estimated that additional staffing and operating costs of new or expanded visitors center facilities would total about \$0.1 million per year. If the City rents space for a facility, the annual rental costs would range from about \$0.1 million to \$0.2 million per year.

For other initiatives such as signage, marketing, outfitting the King Street Metrorail station and kiosks, the costs vary. For a City-wide signage program the costs could be as high as \$2.3 million (mostly up-front capital costs which can be phased in) plus an ongoing maintenance cost. Marketing costs can also vary depending on the level of increased marketing desired and determined to be effective. Consideration of an increase in marketing efforts of between \$0.1 million and \$0.5 million would be reasonable. The costs of outfitting the King Street Metrorail station (or an area immediately outside of it) would vary widely depending on the level of outfitting possible and desired. The costs of kiosks would also vary, depending on the number and features desired in the kiosk type chosen.

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

## **MEMORANDUM**

DATE:

JUNE 5, 2003

TO:

THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM:

PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGERS

SUBJECT:

RECEIPT OF THE VISITORS CENTER CONSULTANT REPORT

**ISSUE:** Consideration of the next steps in the Visitors Center Study process.

## **RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

(1) Receive the Alexandria Visitors Center Report and refer it to the City staff for coordination and further analysis, discussion and consideration by the community; and

(2) Request that the City Manager bring recommendations concerning the establishment (or not) of a new or expanded visitors center to the City Council for public hearing and final determination before the end of 2003.

BACKGROUND: Over the past decade the City has several times considered alternative locations for its current visitors center located at 221 King Street in Ramsay House. These considerations have been based upon the widespread acknowledgment that tourism is an important element of the Alexandria economy and that Ramsay House is too small (with only a 400 square foot welcome, orientation and information area) to adequately serve tourists, as well as its tourist information room is difficult to find and utilize with the requirement of climbing many stairs, and with an entrance that is difficult for tourists to find and utilize.

In order to determine the best location for a visitors center and to define what a visitors center for the City of Alexandria should be, the City sought out, through a competitive process, experts in the area of tourism development and promotion to conduct a thorough and independent study of the needs of the City. The study was started in the fall of 2002 with a series of interviews of residential and business stakeholders, entailed substantial data gathering and analysis, and included a presentation at a Council work session on April 22 of the consultant's draft findings. The consultant has now finished its report: *Alexandria Visitors Center Report* (Attachment 1). Given the voluminous size of this report and its appendices, copies will be placed for public review in the City Clerk's Office, the Department of Planning and Zoning, at the Beatley Library, and at the offices of the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association. Copies of the executive summary of the report (Attachment I) and the consultant's PowerPoint summary (Attachment II) of the report will be posted on the City's web site, as well as the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA) web site.

## **Report Findings**

National and Local Tourism Trends: The report notes that while tourism grew in the 1990s nationally, it slowed in 2001. The tragic events of September 11, 2001, the temporary closing of National Airport, the sniper incidents, the anthrax incidents, and the periodic increased terrorist alerts have all contributed to a decline in the tourism industry in the region, as well as in Alexandria. While tourism nationally and in the region is expected to grow in the future, the growth may be slow and may be selective based upon increased competition for limited tourism dollars.

Alexandria has assets which are considered competitive. These include being in a state which has 55% of the population of the United States within 500 miles and being very attractive to cultural and heritage oriented tourists. More tourists are now choosing to drive and to take shorter, but more frequent vacations. Cultural and heritage tourism is important because this element of the tourism market is growing, has longer staying patterns, and spends more than typical tourists.

A recently completed survey of 952 visitors to the City, titled *Profile Study of the Alexandria Visitor*, found that:

- Alexandria tourists have a higher median income of \$77,000 which is substantially higher than the national average of \$48,500,
- Repeat business is evident as 62% of tourists have been to Alexandria before,
- Word-of-mouth from friends and family dominates the source for discovering Alexandria,
- Alexandria's proximity to Mt Vernon is important,
- 59% of visitors stay at least two days,
- Nine out of ten visitors give Alexandria the highest satisfaction rating allowed, and
- On a list of twelve activities that tourists to Alexandria recommend, the Visitors Center was 12th on the list with only 3% of the survey respondents listing it.

<u>Comparables</u>: The consultant study looked at five other jurisdictions' visitors centers. Factors reviewed included: location in relation to the tourist domain, size of facility, parking, shuttle services and purpose that the facility serves in order to understand what might work for Alexandria. These included:

- Charleston, South Carolina
- Montgomery, Alabama
- Corning, New York
- Newport, Rhode Island
- Easton, Pennsylvania

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT): In order to determine the type and location of a visitors center for the City, a SWOT analysis was undertaken to assess and evaluate the tourism market and to help develop recommendations for City Council consideration. A summary of this analysis is provided in chart form below:

Proposed Mission: Based upon the analysis of the Alexandria tourism market and its potential, as a precursor to making site and facility size recommendations, the consultant drafted a proposed mission for an Alexandria Visitors Center. This proposed mission states:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Well-defined Visitor Domain     Access to Large Regional Market     Condition of Public Environment     Unique Product     Alexandria is Attractive to the Cultural & Heritage Tourist     Tourist Satisfaction     Increasing Realization of the Value Tourism Provides the City	<ul> <li>Signage</li> <li>Parking</li> <li>Visitor and Tourism Data and Research with Respect to Day Trippers</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>New Visitors Center</li> <li>Increased Tourism Marketing</li> <li>Support for Tourism</li> <li>Maximize Riverfront Potential</li> <li>Partnerships</li> <li>Partnering with Washington, DC and Mt. Vernon</li> <li>Moving Tourists Beyond Old Town</li> <li>Nurture Relationship with Motorcoach Operators</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Conflicts Between         Tourism Activities         and Neighborhoods</li> <li>Change</li> <li>Traffic Congestion</li> <li>Competition from         Other Localities</li> <li>Terrorism</li> </ul>

The important conclusion that the consultant reached states "the (Alexandria Visitors) Center should orient, inform and educate visitors; prepare them for the remainder of their stay; motivate them to go out and find historic sites, and other attractions and amenities. The Center will provide an interpretative context for, or linking of, these sites, attractions and amenities, but it will not, for the most part, be a place where the stories are told of the interpretation is rendered for individual sites and attractions." This conclusion is key as it ultimately drives the scope (size, staffing, mission, and cost), and to some degree the locational options of an Alexandria Visitors Center.

As an outcome of this conclusion, the consultant recommends that the City have a visitors center of 3,500 square feet (gross square feet), including a 1,500 square foot information and orientation area. Such a facility could serve about 1,000 visitors on a peak day, including about 75 persons at any single peak time.

Locational Analysis: In developing locational options for a visitors center, the consultant had to analyze travel patterns, the location of tourist sites, and fit that with the experience that (p. 66) "successful visitors centers are located where they are easy to find and use, both for tourists who intended to stop there first, as well as for those who come upon it in their travels and decide to stop in." This resulted in the consultant eliminating from consideration locations outside of the tourist domain of Old Town, and then focused for site locations the King Street corridor area from the King Street Metro Station to the Potomac River. This is where the tourists are, where there is greater potential for increasing tourism, where tourists (such as those traveling between Washington D.C. and Mt. Vernon) can be easily diverted to, and therefore this makes the best location to consider in looking at visitors center site alternatives.

<u>Report Recommendations</u>: The report contains two classes of recommendations. The first is a set of general recommendations common to all sites (as well as the status quo option of doing nothing to change the existing Ramsay House Visitors Center). The second set of recommendations represents the site location alternatives for a new or expanded visitors center.

The general recommendations include:

- Substantially improve (or create) signage and wayfinding systems. Informational and directional signage for tourists is a critical weakness of the City. If tourists are to learn what the City has to offer, lengthen their visits, as well as visit again, making it easy to find the visitors center, City historic sites, amenities and parking is necessary.
- Mass transit-oriented tourism should be further encouraged. The DASH About is a
  start towards this end, but more can be done to encourage more mass transit use,
  expand the DASH About, as well as encourage visitors who are staying in the
  Washington D.C. area outside of the City to visit the City via Metrorail.
- Supplemental information opportunities such as having mini-stands or kiosks at City
  events such as the Red Cross Festival or the Scottish Walk can boost tourism
  (including promoting Alexandria as a shopping and dining destination), especially
  from those living in the greater Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area.
- Alternative parking programs (discounts, better signage, increased availability) should be developed in order to make parking for tourists easier than it currently is.
- Encourage greater use of motorcoaches, as well as have motorcoaches extend what is
  typically a short stay in the City. This would require a more active motorcoach
  management and expanded off-site parking for motorcoaches.

The six options, which include different siting options, presented by the consultant include:

Options 1 and 2 New Visitors Center on Upper King Street: These options would have a new facility constructed on either the King Street Metro station parking lot or on the east end of the King Street Gardens triangle park adjacent to the King

Street and Diagonal Road intersection. A center at this site would primarily serve Metrorail users and would require most tourists and tour buses to leave the primary tourist domain and go out of their way to use the visitors center.

Option 3

New Visitors Center in the Metro Station Concourse: This option would construct a visitors center at one end of the Metro station concourse or the other under the existing Metrorail platform. A center at this site would primarily serve Metrorail users and would require most tourists and tour buses to leave the primary tourist domain and go out of their way to use the visitors center.

Option 4

New Visitors Center on Market Square: This option would add a visitors center to the east side of Market Square in the area where the planters are located and over the entrance to the Market Square parking garage. It is also proposed that a open air pavilion for farmer's market and civic stage use be constructed on the other side of Market Square. Market Square is scheduled for renovation in the next few years and the construction of a new facility would need to be coordinated with it, as well as coordinated with the proposal for the location of a Martin Luther King statue on Market Square. This Market Square location option would site the visitors center in the heart of the tourist domain as well as provide a single floor visitors center. This site is in the heart of the tourist domain. The consultant believes that this location and single floor design is the strongest of all the options presented

Option 5

Ramsay House Renovation and Expansion: This option would provide a two story addition to Ramsay House over the adjoining garden area. The tourist orientation and information area would be on the first floor and tourist restrooms on the second floor. The report states that the architectural style would be respectful of the history associated with Ramsay House and the surrounding area. This site also is in the heart of the tourist domain, and represents the second strongest of all the options presented.

Option 6:

Ramsay House Status Quo or Renovation with Ancillary Welcome Space at the King Street Metro Station: This option would improve the interior of Ramsay House and add a welcome/orientation area to the King Street Metrorail station to the largely vacant ground level lobby area in the southern end of the station where the original entrance is located.

The major findings of the consultant's report were presented to Council at a work session on April 22, and then to the ACVA Board of Governors and to the Alexandria Hotel Association on May 12. For both of those meetings various civic associations and business groups (in or adjacent to where the site options were proposed), were invited, and some of these groups were able to send representatives. Further presentations to, and discussions with, these groups will need to occur over the coming months. Also an analysis of the various site options by City and ACVA staff will also need to occur. It is proposed that after there is time to conduct these analyses and to obtain

community input, that recommendations be brought back by City staff to Council before the end of 2003, with a public hearing scheduled on the recommendations.

In regard to the visitors center consultant recommendation that, regardless of the option visitors center site option chosen, a better coordinated signage and wayfinding signing program is needed in the City, staff has begun to study how other cities have developed and implemented such coordinated sign programs, as well as what a program might entail and how, and over what time period, it might be implemented. At some point before the end of 2003, either with or separate from the visitors center recommendations, staff will report its findings and make signage and wayfinding program process recommendations to Council. This report would not include a specific new sign program, but would define it, and make recommendations about whether or not, or to what degree, the City should start such a program.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The various visitors center options have a wide range of costs. A new or expanded visitors center could cost (measured on an order of magnitude basis) \$1.6 million for the expansion of Ramsay House, \$2.6 million for the Market Square option, and between \$2.2 million and \$2.5 million for the upper King Street options. Ramsay House renovated and not expanded along with a welcome space in the King Street Metro station was not cost estimated, but would be the lowest cost alternative with a wide range of costs depending on how extensive the renovations and the welcome space program design were. Costing the signage and wayfinding program is difficult without defining how comprehensive and extensive such a program would be. Based upon preliminary discussions with experts in this area, an extensive signage and wayfinding program however could cost upwards to \$1.5 million. However, a less comprehensive program could cost much less. A program can also be designed in phases and implemented over a number of years, thereby reducing up-front costs.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

- I. Executive Summary of the Alexandria Visitors Center Report
- II. PowerPoint Summary of the Alexandria Visitors Center Report

## STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager
Barbara Ross, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Zoning

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Alexandria is a city rich in history and cultural attractions with high quality dining and shopping experiences. These attributes make it attractive to residents and tourists. Tourism plays an important role in the local economy. The City commissioned this study to determine if a new visitors center is warranted and if so where it might be located. In conducting this study a team lead by Parter International, Inc. researched local and national tourism trends, conducted and reviewed surveys, held interviews, meetings and focus groups with a cross section of stakeholders, researched comparable facilities and identified potential locations for a new visitors center.

Alexandria has significant strengths as a tourism destination with a well-defined visitor domain and access to a large regional market of visitors. The city is unique, safe and friendly with visitors showing a high level of satisfaction with their experience in Alexandria. The city is poised to take advantage of growing support for tourism, a strong existing promotional effort and potential partnerships to maintain and enhance the economic benefit associated with increased visitation.

There is strong support for a new or enhanced Visitors Center in Alexandria to provide information and orientation to the city. Such a center would encourage visitors to fully explore the sights, attractions, shops and restaurants, stay longer, spend more, return again and recommend Alexandria as a destination to others. Properly located, it would act as a staging point for tours and events and a sender to all parts of the City.

Stakeholders felt a presence in the Old Town area was important. An analysis of traffic patterns reveals that visitors arrive almost evenly from the north and south making an Old Town location the most viable. Local concerns regarding parking and traffic need to be addressed as part of a larger transportation analysis and plan. The proportion of traffic related to visitors does not significantly contribute to existing conditions. Improvements in signage and wayfinding will help visitors navigate the City more efficiently and ease some of these issues.

An analysis of the existing Ramsay House Visitors Center shows that it is insufficient to meet the current and future goal of effectively and efficiently conveying tourist information. Although thought to be an historic structure, it is in fact a reproduction building that replaced a larger structure that was heavily damaged by fire in the 1940's. In a main area of about 400 square feet, the building currently serves more than 115,000 visitors a year. The majority of these visitors arrive in a season starting in April and running through October. To properly accommodate and serve existing visitors and anticipated growth in visitation, Alexandria needs a Visitors Center of approximately 3,500 gross square feet.

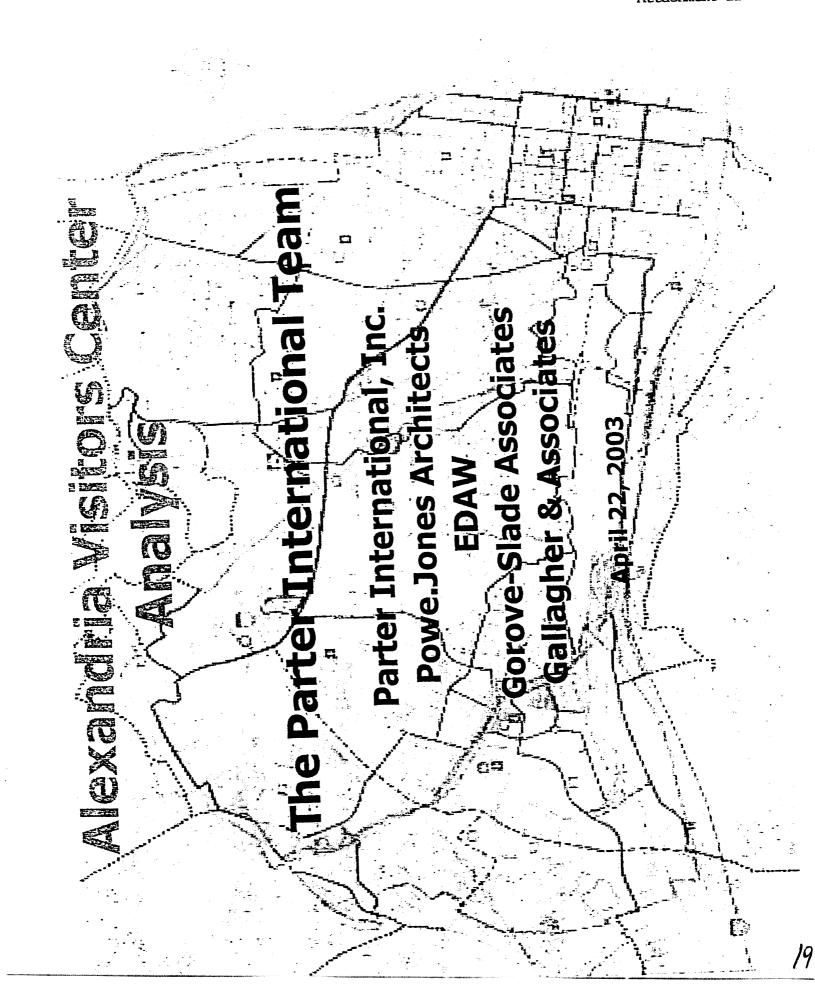
The Parter Team established site criteria and reviewed potential Visitors Center scenarios with a variety of stakeholders. With input from those interviewed, the Team identified potential locations throughout the city. Each location was analyzed with respect to its positive and negative impacts on residential and commercial activities in the surrounding area, traffic patterns, parking availability, public transportation, accessibility and other factors.

## Alexandria Visitor's Center Report

A number of recommendations are made which are common to all locations. These include improvements in signage and wayfinding, exploration of changes in public bus service through special passes, extension of DASH About or free off peak service, and additional detailed parking and traffic evaluations. Motorcoach management through signage and route alterations is also recommended. Finally, creating supplemental information opportunities for festivals, events and busy days is also recommended.

Seven recommendations are made that include five potential locations. Three locations surround the King Street Metro Station. They are construction of a new facility either on the triangle formed by Diagonal, King and Daingerfield or on the Metro parking lot area or in the METRO Station Concourse. Two locations are in the heart of Old Town. They are a renovation and expansion of Ramsay House and the construction of a pair of pavilions on the planter areas of Market Square. One of these pavilions would function as the Visitors Center and the other as an open-air structure for the farmers market, events and festivals. Another option is to renovate Ramsay House and create an ancillary space associated with the King Street METRO Station. Lastly, the option exists not to make investment in physical improvements but rather to expand tourism marketing.

After thorough analysis and a series of public meetings and presentations, the Parter Team believes that the strongest options, and those with support from stakeholders, are the Ramsay House expansion and the Market Square options. The Market Square option is stronger programmatically than Ramsay House in terms of creating a positive visitor experience within the center. Both of these options serve to create a strong central presence in the visitor domain that is welcoming to visitors and conveys the quality experience associated with the City that will encourage people to stay longer, spend more and return again.





## The Assignment

- The Assignment:
- Whether New Visitors Center Warranted
- If So, Where Should It Be Placed?

## Information Gathering



Local / National

Primary Research

Interviews

Site Visits

Surveys

Focus Groups

Client Meetings

## Findings

Strengths	Weaknesses	<b>Opportunities</b>	Threats
■ Well-Defined Visitor	■ Signage	■ New Visitors Center	<ul><li>Conflicts between fourism activities and</li></ul>
Access to Large	• Parking   • Visitor and Tourism	■ Increased Tourism Marketing	neighborhoods
Regional Market	Data and Research	<ul><li>Support for Tourism</li></ul>	■ Change
<ul><li>Condition of Public</li></ul>	With Respect to Day	<ul><li>Maximize Riverfront</li></ul>	<ul><li>Traffic Congestion</li></ul>
Environment	Trippers	Potential	<ul> <li>Competition From</li> </ul>
■ Unique Product		<ul><li>Partnerships</li></ul>	Other Localities
<ul><li>Alexandria is</li></ul>		<ul><li>Partnering with</li></ul>	■ Terrorism
Attractive to the		Washington, DC and Mt.	
Cultural & Heritage	-	Vernon	
Tourist		<ul> <li>Moving Tourists Beyond</li> </ul>	
<ul><li>Tourist Satisfaction</li></ul>		Old Town	
■ Increasing		<ul><li>Nurture Relationship</li></ul>	
Realization of the		with Motor Coach	
Value Tourism		Operators	
Provides the City			

## Tourism & Economics

- Strong drive market
- Alexandria tourist median income
- Repeat visitors
- Satisfaction rating
- The DC visitor
- Tourism economic impact
- Motor coach impact

# Proposed Visitors Center Mission

- Provide a welcoming, pleasing and fun experience designed to encourage visitors:
  - to participate in all aspects of Alexandria;
- to visit the surrounding area of Old Town, its historic and other attractions, restaurants and shopping;
- to visit other Alexandria area and attractions outside of primary visitor domain;
- to stay longer in and return to Alexandria; and
- to leave as satisfied visitors and goodwill ambassadors for Alexandria.



Parter International, Inc.

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# Proposed Visitor Center Mission

- amenities, reservations and ticketing, and access to attractions, facilities, hotels, restaurants and Provide information, directions, basic visitor entertainment.
- Act as a staging point for walking, trolley and garden tours to reduce idling time and travel time for buses in the area.
- Act as a node or pick-up/drop-off point to encourage the use of mass transit.
- help make their stay an interesting and pleasant one. Convince tourists that Alexandria cares and wants to

## Comparables

- Charleston, South Carolina
- Montgomery, Alabama
- Newport, Rhode Island
- Corning, New York
- Easton, Pennsylvania
- Types of Visitors Centers
- Information centers
- Information and orientation centers
- Interpretive centers

## Ramsay House Analysis

- History
- Services Offered
- Visitation & Usage
- Transportation
- Traffic & Parking
- Assessment



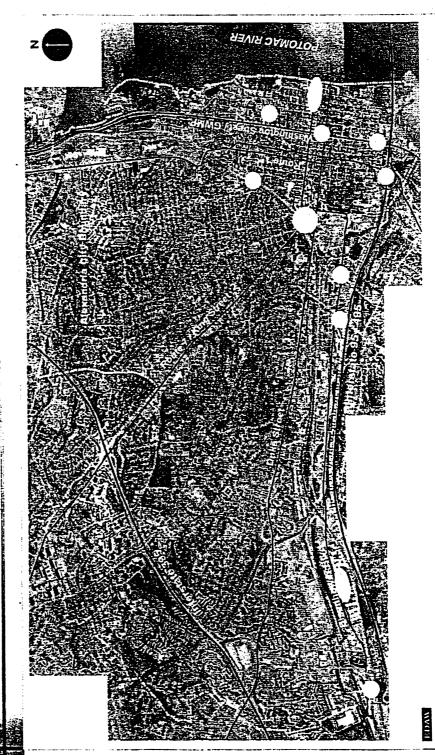
Parter International, Inc.



## Site Criteria

- Relationship to tourist domain- King Street/center of Old Town
- Positive and negative impacts on residential and business neighbors
- Easy vehicular access, convenient to parking, public transportation/DASH/shuttle
- Convenience for motor coach tours
- Exterior spaces usable in fair weather for overflow and staging
- Visually accessible and identifiable for pedestrian and car traveler
- Connections and relationships to attractions, lodging, shopping & restaurants
- Public acceptance/acceptability
- Costs
- Operational issues

## Double Considered



## POTENTIAL LOCATIONS CONSIDERED

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA VISITOR CENTER ANALYSIS

Parter International, Inc.

# Recommendations Common to All

## Signage & Wayfinding

define districts & identity, reinforce the experience, Improvements will help manage traffic & parking, create linkages

## Public Transportation

- Encourage special bus passes; Extend DASH ABOUT to weekdays or free off-peak DASH
- King Street signal synchronization & larger pull-offs to clear lane of traffic

## 12

# Recommendations Common to All

## Motor Coach Management

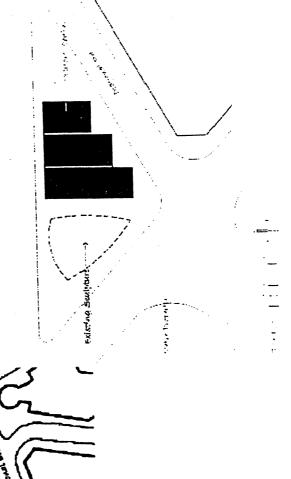
- Improve signage, establish designated routes
- Set aside more drop-off on Market Square, identify and mark additional parking and partnerships

## Parking

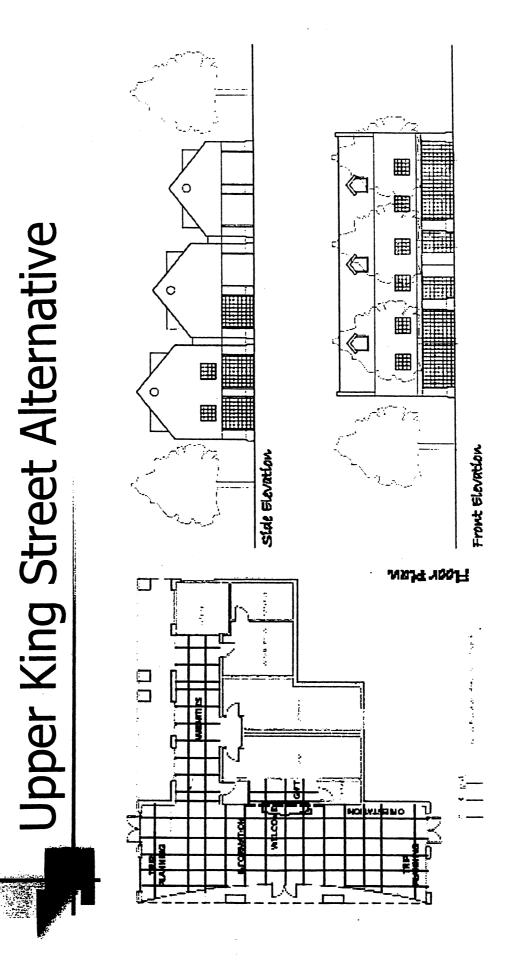
regulations & explore discount rate structures Develop parking census, review parking

# Recommended Site Alternatives

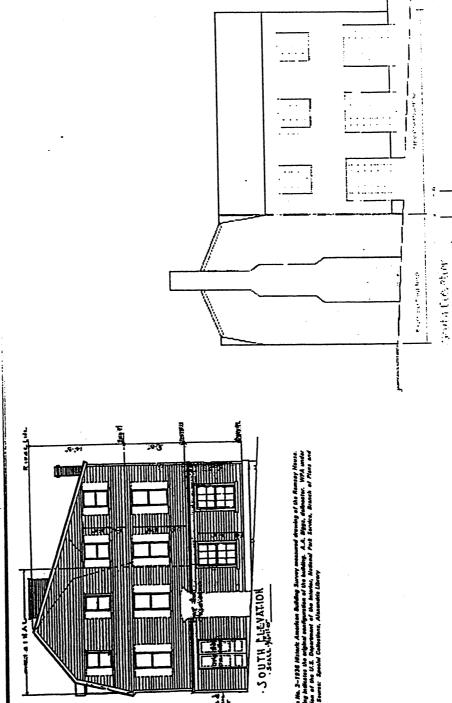
- King Street Metro Station Lot
- King Street Triangle
- King Street Metro Concourse
- Market Square
- Ramsay Renovation & Expansion
- Ramsay Status Quo/Renovate+Metro
- Ramsay Status Quo Marketing



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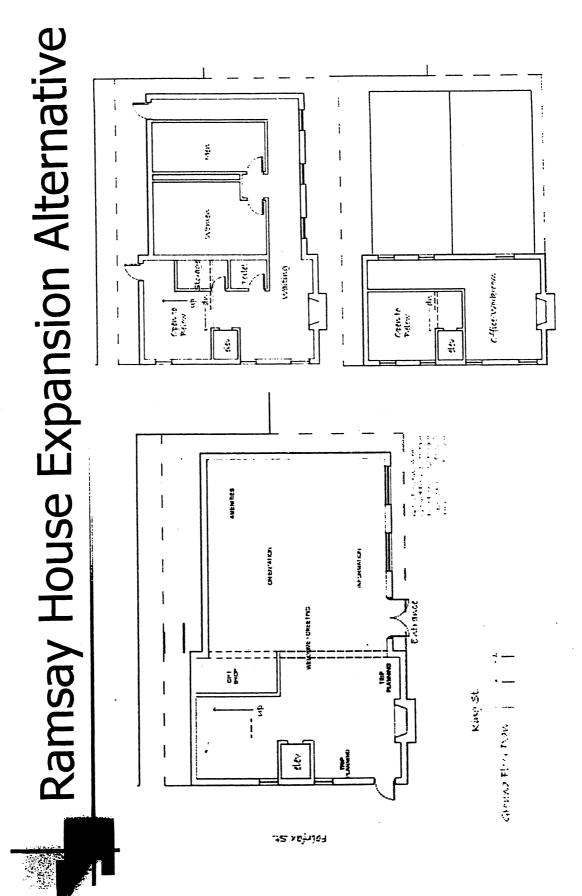


# Ramsay House Expansion Alternative

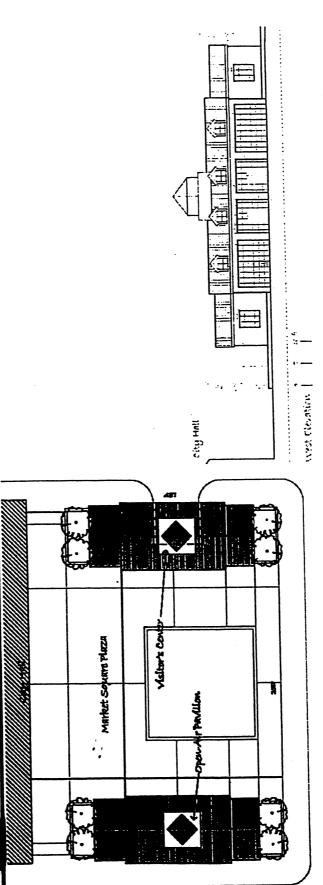


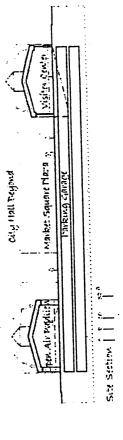
Parter International, Inc.

## Parter International, Inc.



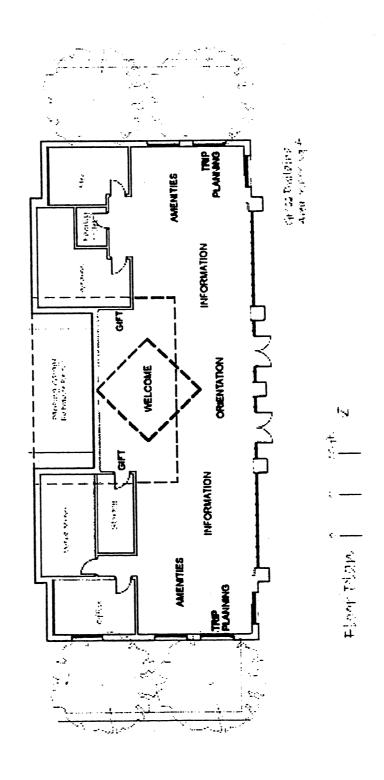






Parter International, Inc.

# Market Square Alternative



King St. Triangle																		,				
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	SILE ISSUES! TOPE I CONTROLLES		Site Acquisition	Proximity to Attractions	Visibility	Auto Accessibility	Metro Accessibility	Motorcoach Accessibility	Pedestrian Marshalling	Impact on Neighborhood	Size Fit w/ Program	Impact on Site	<b>MSITOR CENTER ISSUES</b>	Site/Building Ownership	Visitor Experience	Visitor Convenience	Availability of Bus Queuing	Tour Marshalling Space	Impact on Neighborhood	First Cost	Operational Efficiency	ADA Accessibility

Parter International, Inc.



1-24-04

# VISITOR'S CENTER Alexandria City Council Public Hearing January 24, 2004

Mr. Mayor and Members of Council, my name is Lonnie Rich and I am here today as the Alexandria Chamber's Vice-Chair for Government Relations. We strongly support the idea for a new or expanded Visitor's Center.

Although staff has encouraged you to table this issue, it is our opinion that you should not. The consultant and other groups that have looked at the current facility have concluded that it is inadequate for our tourists. Intuitively, this adversely affects the many small businesses, shops, restaurants and hotels who are dependent upon tourists being adequately served so they will stay longer, shop more, return to Alexandria and tell their friends about us.

I understand that an economic cost benefit analysis has not been done to prove these benefits which many of us perceive intuitively, but I have two comments:

First, if a study is needed, then commission the study rather than

tabling the matter. The Chamber is willing to work cooperatively with your consultant to perform such an analysis.

Second, and more importantly, we often act without a formal economic study. Over the last decade or so, we have rehabilitated, upgraded or expanded many of our public facilities – schools, libraries, recreation centers, ball fields, even City Hall – all, to my knowledge, without any economic cost benefit analysis. Why? Simply because that is what a world-class, first-class City does.

We know that our Visitor's Center is inadequate for our tourists and that it is inadequate for a City like Alexandria that has so much to offer our visitors. I encourage you to keep the new or expanded Visitor's Center alive with or without a formal economic study and I encourage you to get this project in the queue for our capital improvement budget.

Thank you.

#9

Docket item 9 Visitors Center January 24, 2004

Good Morning, I am Lillian J. White, co-president of the League of Women Voters of Alexandria. We support promoting the economic health of our city by promoting tourism.

A way to accomplish this is to establish a Visitors Center that has high visibility and accessibility. Establish a Visitors Center that offers interpretive history, event promotion, information and, of course accessible rest rooms and possibly a cyberspace café. Establish a Visitors Center that is integrated in the heart of the historical center, Old Town.

We think the Hannelores' site on Pitt and King Streets fits this description. But we do not think you should ignore consideration of expanding the Ramsey site, adding the use of interpretative technology, restrooms and making it ADA compliant because we realize the lease and built out expenses of establishing a Visitors Center at Pitt and King Streets.

We do not support taking open/civic space from the front of City Hall to build a center or locating and building a center on the awkward space at the King Street Park site, the hat.

Furthermore, we recommend installing a Kiosk at King Street Station (working with WMATA), inside the gate and unstaffed.

According to Mark Jinks, the assistant city manager most tourists enter the city by car from Washington Street (80%), therefore we recommend installing signage designed to meet Washington Street standards that directs visitors to the center. We also recommend off Washington Street signage that directs tourists to City parking garages and lots.

At the city parking areas, we recommend pictorial maps of historical sights. We also recommend offering some free parking during high tourist season at designated areas.

A successful plan must include Motor Coach Management. We strongly recommend designated tour bus routes and parking sites around the city. We further recommend that tourist that come to our city by tour buses be dropped off at the King Street Metro area and board Dash About free ride with guides assigned to travel a King Street/Mt. Vernon Avenue Del Ray route. We also recommend a huge campaign to encourage the DC connected and other visitors to use Metro rail.

We recommend that the marketing plan include:

\*working with the hotel association, hotels, motels, bookstores, retailers, the Chambers to promote an integrated plan and to promote advertising of the city.

\*working with DC/Mt. Vernon tourist centers.

\*costumed character on King Street to also direct visitors to lower King Street shops and restaurants, the Torpedo Factory and, of course the waterfront.

\*encourage Gadsbys to hold the 18<sup>th</sup> century fair at least 2X a year and assist them to do so.

We strongly recommend showing off our historical city from the Lyceum, Gadsbys, the Black Resource Center to the Archaeology Museum and Fort Ward Museum and Park and, of course, the waterfront.

The end result would only mean happy tourists and cash registers ringing. In 2002 tourism statistics showed a \$425.2 million in tourism revenue with \$10.3 million in taxes generated for our city. Wise further planning can accomplish more, which would also help relieve some of the real estate burden placed on property owners in our city.

We recommend not making a decision today or on the 27<sup>th</sup> without, if you have not done so, carefully considering the location and the cost benefits for the city. We highly recommend going ahead with Motor Coach Management and signage considerations as soon as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important project.

TO

The Honorable William Euille, Mayor, and Members of the Alexandria

City Council

**FROM** 

**SUBJECT** 

Antique Guild, 113 North Fairfax Street,

Bernard Street, Alexandria; and,

Leslie Anderson, resident 400 Madison Street, #1505, Alexandria

Presentation of Citizen Signatures in Opposition to the Procenter Construction on Market Square. and Construction on Market Square.

DATE

December 24, 2004

Attached are the signatures of 274 citizens of Alexandria and surrounding communities, expressing opposition to the construction of a visitor center on Market Square in Old Town.

The signatures were collected over a one month period from October 24<sup>th</sup> through the end of November 2003 with the intention of presenting them at the public hearing on January 24, 2004 for consideration of the Council on January 27, 2004. Since the City Manager's December 4th report to the Mayor and Council recommends against Market Square for such a project and likewise for a Ramsey House expansion, we hope that these petitions will serve to strengthen that recommendation and permanently eliminate both sites from the considerations cited in the Parter Report, a study of the visitor center possibilities undertaken in 2003 by Parter International, Inc. at the request of the City of Alexandria.

About the Petition Drive: The purpose of the petition drive was to poll the community about the construction of a visitor center on Market Square and to verify the sense of overwhelming opposition to such construction that was expressed by citizens attending the October 23<sup>rd</sup> general public meeting/consultant presentation at City Hall.

The signatures were gathered by several individuals at a variety of venues, including: 1) the Saturday morning market, 2) local businesses, 3) local civic and residents' meetings and, 4) individual residences. While the petition question sought opinion solely on the matter of Market Square, many signers also raised questions about other visitor center options proposed in the Prater Report (e.g. Ramsey House modifications) and about Alexandria's general approach to tourism.

The Signatures: The majority of petition signatures represent the views of business owners and residents of Old Town Alexandria. These are individuals whose businesses are in Old Town, who live in the immediate vicinity of Market Square or who live

nearby. In addition, the petitions include the opinions of residents in surrounding communities who frequent Market Square and shop in the area.

The Result: The 274 individuals signers of these petitions represent a broad and unambiguous consensus opposed to altering the character or openness of Market Square with additional structures. While the poll had a single focus, it must also be noted that many petitioners also expressed opposition to constructing on open space in order to expand Ramsey House. Finally, and, importantly, they raised useful questions about the nature of the study that was mounted at considerable expense to the City and seemed to be aimed more at substantiating a preconceived assumption about the need for a new or expanded visitor center than at illuminating an issue through objective fact-finding. As one example, these 274 signatures represent a broader cross-section of citizen interest than the limited number of 29 individuals interviewed for the Parter study, nearly half of whom are from a roster of City officials, employees and contractors.

Beyond the Petition: Beyond opposition to construction on Market Square, many who signed these petitions also reflect a general concern about tourism as a development issue for Alexandria. They asked if the City planned to study the pros and cons of increased tourism in Old Town. If attracting more visitors can be determined to be compatible with the configuration and lifestyle of the area and has reasonable economic benefits, will the City examine approaches to promoting tourism that will showcase the attractions of the City – historical, arts, dining, lodging and commercial – and that will also respect the needs and wishes of the local population who live, work and trade in Old Town?

<u>Petition Presentation</u>: We present these citizen petitions and related issues in this memorandum respectfully to the Mayor and Council for review and consideration.

NAME (print)	ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip) SIGNATURE
1. Bruce Schafer	801 S. Pitt St Alex VA Bilbalify
2. Mara Territo	The Antique Quild 113 N. Fairfait House Stuffe Alut, 14. 22314
3. Inez Territo s	501 Slater: Lane +109, Alexandra, VA. 22314 Jones Sessits
4. AGNES E. ITANITZ	6621 WAKE FIELD D. ALEXANDRIA, VA. A. Kamita
5. MICHAEL SHULS	14 HIGKHOUDER ST. ALEXIUA Michael Souls
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11. Donald LIver	
12. Jim Waller	110 N. Union St. Alexandria VA
13. H. E. Soyster	2181 Jamieson Are 4,503 Al-xandria, VA
14. Joyce Bramblett	2181 Jamieson Alie #1503 Alexandria, VA
15. Michael 111 541000	3205 OPRILE HILL Det alley 100 22305
	ez 1511 Paul Spring Plans Alexandria, VA 33308
17. Michael C. Maibace	
18. tamela Beward	1758 Hester Road Alexandra UA 22303
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9. GREG. HILL	422 PRINCESS ST L	lex Gran CZD
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11. Paul Klinefelter	325 N. Pitt St.	Helandrin VA
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15. JANE W. BROWN	N 659 Longle of Rel Streveport. La 71106
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We the undersigned oppose the construction of a visitor center on Market Square in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia:

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NAME (print)	ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip)	SIGNATURE
1. MARTHA LOW GUGGERSE		
2. Thomas Couples	Alleananie Up 2230	L.
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We the undersigned oppose the construction of a visitor center on Market Square in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia:

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14. Laura Nakatani	119 N. Peyton St. Ale	x. IR. Model
15. Courtney Elwood	513 Dyke St. Alexandria	/ 1 //
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We the undersigned oppose the construction of a visitor center on Market Square in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia:

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1-24-04

# VISITOR'S CENTER Alexandria City Council Public Hearing January 24, 2004

Mr. Mayor and Members of Council, my name is Lonnie Rich and I am here today as the Alexandria Chamber's Vice-Chair for Government Relations. We strongly support the idea for a new or expanded Visitor's Center.

Although staff has encouraged you to table this issue, it is our opinion that you should not. The consultant and other groups that have looked at the current facility have concluded that it is inadequate for our tourists. Intuitively, this adversely affects the many small businesses, shops, restaurants and hotels who are dependent upon tourists being adequately served so they will stay longer, shop more, return to Alexandria and tell their friends about us.

I understand that an economic cost benefit analysis has not been done to prove these benefits which many of us perceive intuitively, but I have two comments:

First, if a study is needed, then commission the study rather than

tabling the matter. The Chamber is willing to work cooperatively with your consultant to perform such an analysis.

Second, and more importantly, we often act without a formal economic study. Over the last decade or so, we have rehabilitated, upgraded or expanded many of our public facilities – schools, libraries, recreation centers, ball fields, even City Hall – all, to my knowledge, without any economic cost benefit analysis. Why? Simply because that is what a world-class, first-class City does.

We know that our Visitor's Center is inadequate for our tourists and that it is inadequate for a City like Alexandria that has so much to offer our visitors. I encourage you to keep the new or expanded Visitor's Center alive with or without a formal economic study and I encourage you to get this project in the queue for our capital improvement budget.

Thank you.

#9

Docket item 9 Visitors Center January 24, 2004

Good Morning, I am Lillian J. White, co-president of the League of Women Voters of Alexandria. We support promoting the economic health of our city by promoting tourism.

A way to accomplish this is to establish a Visitors Center that has high visibility and accessibility. Establish a Visitors Center that offers interpretive history, event promotion, information and, of course accessible rest rooms and possibly a cyberspace café. Establish a Visitors Center that is integrated in the heart of the historical center, Old Town.

We think the Hannelores' site on Pitt and King Streets fits this description. But we do not think you should ignore consideration of expanding the Ramsey site, adding the use of interpretative technology, restrooms and making it ADA compliant because we realize the lease and built out expenses of establishing a Visitors Center at Pitt and King Streets.

We do not support taking open/civic space from the front of City Hall to build a center or locating and building a center on the awkward space at the King Street Park site, the hat.

Furthermore, we recommend installing a Kiosk at King Street Station (working with WMATA), inside the gate and unstaffed.

According to Mark Jinks, the assistant city manager most tourists enter the city by car from Washington Street (80%), therefore we recommend installing signage designed to meet Washington Street standards that directs visitors to the center. We also recommend off Washington Street signage that directs tourists to City parking garages and lots.

At the city parking areas, we recommend pictorial maps of historical sights. We also recommend offering some free parking during high tourist season at designated areas.

A successful plan must include Motor Coach Management. We strongly recommend designated tour bus routes and parking sites around the city. We further recommend that tourist that come to our city by tour buses be dropped off at the King Street Metro area and board Dash About free ride with guides assigned to travel a King Street/Mt. Vernon Avenue Del Ray route. We also recommend a huge campaign to encourage the DC connected and other visitors to use Metro rail.

We recommend that the marketing plan include:

\*working with the hotel association, hotels, motels, bookstores, retailers, the Chambers to promote an integrated plan and to promote advertising of the city.

\*working with DC/Mt. Vernon tourist centers.

\*costumed character on King Street to also direct visitors to lower King Street shops and restaurants, the Torpedo Factory and, of course the waterfront.

\*encourage Gadsbys to hold the 18<sup>th</sup> century fair at least 2X a year and assist them to do so.

We strongly recommend showing off our historical city from the Lyceum, Gadsbys, the Black Resource Center to the Archaeology Museum and Fort Ward Museum and Park and, of course, the waterfront.

The end result would only mean happy tourists and cash registers ringing. In 2002 tourism statistics showed a \$425.2 million in tourism revenue with \$10.3 million in taxes generated for our city. Wise further planning can accomplish more, which would also help relieve some of the real estate burden placed on property owners in our city.

We recommend not making a decision today or on the 27<sup>th</sup> without, if you have not done so, carefully considering the location and the cost benefits for the city. We highly recommend going ahead with Motor Coach Management and signage considerations as soon as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important project.

TO

The Honorable William Euille, Mayor, and Members of the Alexandria

**City Council** 

**FROM** 

SUBJECT

Antique Guild, 113 North Fairfax Street,

Bernard Street, Alexandria; and,

Leslie Anderson, resident 400 Madison Street, #1505, Alexandria

Presentation of Citizen Signatures in Opposition to the Proceeding Center Construction on Market Square, and Constructio

**DATE** 

January December 24, 2004

Attached are the signatures of 274 citizens of Alexandria and surrounding communities, expressing opposition to the construction of a visitor center on Market Square in Old Town.

The signatures were collected over a one month period from October 24<sup>th</sup> through the end of November 2003 with the intention of presenting them at the public hearing on January 24, 2004 for consideration of the Council on January 27, 2004. Since the City Manager's December 4th report to the Mayor and Council recommends against Market Square for such a project and likewise for a Ramsey House expansion, we hope that these petitions will serve to strengthen that recommendation and permanently eliminate both sites from the considerations cited in the Parter Report, a study of the visitor center possibilities undertaken in 2003 by Parter International, Inc. at the request of the City of Alexandria.

About the Petition Drive: The purpose of the petition drive was to poll the community about the construction of a visitor center on Market Square and to verify the sense of overwhelming opposition to such construction that was expressed by citizens attending the October 23<sup>rd</sup> general public meeting/consultant presentation at City Hall.

The signatures were gathered by several individuals at a variety of venues, including: 1) the Saturday morning market, 2) local businesses, 3) local civic and residents' meetings and, 4) individual residences. While the petition question sought opinion solely on the matter of Market Square, many signers also raised questions about other visitor center options proposed in the Prater Report (e.g. Ramsey House modifications) and about Alexandria's general approach to tourism.

The Signatures: The majority of petition signatures represent the views of business owners and residents of Old Town Alexandria. These are individuals whose businesses are in Old Town, who live in the immediate vicinity of Market Square or who live

nearby. In addition, the petitions include the opinions of residents in surrounding communities who frequent Market Square and shop in the area.

The Result: The 274 individuals signers of these petitions represent a broad and unambiguous consensus opposed to altering the character or openness of Market Square with additional structures. While the poll had a single focus, it must also be noted that many petitioners also expressed opposition to constructing on open space in order to expand Ramsey House. Finally, and, importantly, they raised useful questions about the nature of the study that was mounted at considerable expense to the City and seemed to be aimed more at substantiating a preconceived assumption about the need for a new or expanded visitor center than at illuminating an issue through objective fact-finding. As one example, these 274 signatures represent a broader cross-section of citizen interest than the limited number of 29 individuals interviewed for the Parter study, nearly half of whom are from a roster of City officials, employees and contractors.

Beyond the Petition: Beyond opposition to construction on Market Square, many who signed these petitions also reflect a general concern about tourism as a development issue for Alexandria. They asked if the City planned to study the pros and cons of increased tourism in Old Town. If attracting more visitors can be determined to be compatible with the configuration and lifestyle of the area and has reasonable economic benefits, will the City examine approaches to promoting tourism that will showcase the attractions of the City – historical, arts, dining, lodging and commercial – and that will also respect the needs and wishes of the local population who live, work and trade in Old Town?

<u>Petition Presentation</u>: We present these citizen petitions and related issues in this memorandum respectfully to the Mayor and Council for review and consideration.

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8. Brian Wolker	474 Princess St. Alex	75 Wall
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17.	1 ory Jone Ra	ch 709 S. Unin St. Alex, Va 22314	
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19.	Camille Mazza	545 Blackhawk Ct Colorado Carro Co	<b>)</b>
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1. Noveollago Toffenes	ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip)  135/ XEC St SHY6  Alex, VA22314	Schothy M. SCMS
2. Chij dayo	4604 Lambert Pl. Dlep. 2	2311 En L Jan
3. Swall Roya	4600 S. 4 Mile Run drive	2 22204 Sarap Rolph
4. Kate Schlabour	400 madison 5+4300	
5. CHRISTING Khls-Her	ounce loasen. 294st Arl, v	is Chit Hohl Hearn
6. ANTOINETTE ROLPH	3512 5 LOTAH ST, ARL, 22	STILL WORK IN OLD ROWN
7. FAM FROST 502 E.	3512 5. LOTAH ST, ARL, 22 LIA RESIDENT 1960-2003- Nelson Ave, Alex, Va. 22301	Pamlo Frust
		22001
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10. MAGEE WHELAN	115 NILLST ALEVANDRA VD	, 22s.   MM
	1250 S. WASHINGTON ST. #510 1250 S. WASHINGTON ST. #5	1) 97314 7462 17 3
12. PHILIP FORSTER	1250 S. WASTINGION >100	NA DOS
13. NICOLO Dur to		-3
14. CHARLES E RICE	739 VOLAND P. ALEXAND	OKIA VII ( horley Thee'
15. ne Dodge	739 lipland Pl. Mas	(intri- Su Dd
	A	12 3220 Milliand
17. CHRISTINE FERNANDEZ	5-103 INT Engli Drive 1-168 / 5-335 DUKE ST. # TOB ALEXANDEN 4228 VERMONT AVE. ALEXANDEN	A VA 22304 CHELLOW
18. CARMEN URBAN	4226	11
19. MEGAN DONLEY 10	2 N. UNION ST ALEXANDRIA	A, VA 22314
20. ANGELA RICC	2 N.UNION ST ALEXANDRIA 4108 JAVINS DV ALLX. VA	ZZ310 AMM
21: Francee Watsor	2003 Treebrooke Ln A	Hex la 2008 Grange

NAME (print)	ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip)	SIGNATURE
1. MARTHA WN GUGGENSER		
2. Thomas Couples	Alexandria UA 2230	
3. PAUL WILLIAMS	110 . N. St ASAPH St. ALE BUCHANANTKIGOZ, 115 N. FAIRFAX	ST You Williams
4. Sergio Muellar	ID300 Zion Drue FX.VA	22032 Duylo hilly
	113 No Fairfox St.  5 1325 N. Sperra Bonita LA, C.A 900.  6041 Woodment Rd. Alex. VA  1315 Commonwealth Ar	46
7. Markith STEPHANIE ELSHEIKH 8. Jennifer Boun	4041 Woodmant Rd. Alex. VA	22307 Sugarsu
9. David Posey 1715	5 N ceiff St. Alexandric, VA	A 22301
10. Pour Severson 6 11. Aluie Kalui 7	50 Columbus CL, Alex HOT, RADNOR RD. BETT	XANDVIN VA 22301 HESDA, MD 20877
12. Alim Rioch 13. Gail Good P.O.	Box 421 Bayboro, NC 28513	Jail Gaal
11 / 2000 V. RIDI 11501	Camerall Court Upper Wa	-1500, MD 20777
15. ROCER TWINN 1420	KEY DR, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22302	- Kogu L. Iwinn
16 BENT ROBERTS 781	3 THIRD AVE BROWKLYN A	n 11209 / 1000 / Color
17. Joseph Samoyeda A Jr. 751	3 third Are, Brothlyn, NY. 11209	Joseph W Lawyedu Jr.
18. Linda Shugart	31 Mill Pond Dr Lancast	en Pa Alnola A-Dhugants
19. R. Roland Shugarts	3 third Are, Broshlyn, N.Y. 11209  31 Mill Pond Dr. Lancaste  51 Mill Pons Dr. Lancaste  4/35 Locom Lane, Arling  Eshall 281 Doral Oper	R, PA 17603 R RM June L
20. Melise Carey	4135 Locom Lane, Arling	, ton, WA ZZZOZ MAM
21. Stefannie Gog	eshall 281 Daral Oper	1, Johnsls S.C.2918

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MARGARET, HODGES  1. Margart Hodges 830 S. LEEST
3. KATY Cannady 20 EAST CAK ST. Katy Cannady
4. LINDA COUTURE 422 N Uman Vinla Contine 5. JUDZIA COLE 607 PRZNCESS ST Judia Contine
6. Jennifer Hollings 511 5. Lee A Jennifor Hollings
7. Townsend A. Van Fleet 26 wolfe St. James Wantlest
8. James lettenberger 107 Prince St. Jung Att W
9. a.M. Person 167 Prince St. a.M. Pierson
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10. Barbara G. Pierson Of Mine St. Barbara P.  11. FRANK W. POLAND 2155. UNION Frank D. 1000
Signal P P mil mid C
13. WHARD HENRY 1021/2 Pance ST. ELIZABETH R SCHWINGT
15 Elymond Should war
16. Latherine Wiegmann 106 Prince St Follows
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18 NFUZNERALHEIDY 1025 P. J. C. F.
18. NELIZABIETH FENRY 1022 PRINCE ST EUROBETH HOLY
18. NELIZOBETH FENRY 1022 PRINCE T FUZOBETH HOLY 19. JACK SULLIVAN 4300 IVANAGE SHOULD White 20. Lillian J White 119 W. Mann Lillian J White
20. Lillian & White 119 W. Mann Lillian & White

NAME (print)	ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip)	SIGNATURE
1. SUSAN LOWTHER	4036 HASONICVIEWAL	E cheer ou traduce
2. TARA LLOYD	221 D. FAIRFAX ST.	Jan Lloyd
3. Kelly White.	323 S. Lee 22314	
<i>A</i> -	A14 Washing 22306	Dellywood
5. F.x. WHYTE	1201 Part Tee Dr. 223.1	1-14
6., JANICE WILDER	F233 CLIFTM FARM CT	Janie Heldes
7. Mariame Melner	1463 Russell Rd	Mane US
8. Pr. Robert Lipnich	5308 fender court ALEX 22304	Robe & Ry
9. Lauren Davis		
10. Lee Ann Sklar	150 / Wake Forest Dr Alex - 22307	10 Colin Succes
11. KEJIN JOAN GOR	5859 monticello	
12. Namey Widnes	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	/ Cotte
12 1/2 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10	N.734 ST Ramsey St 201 alexendence, Va	Vi wi on
13. 1/415/ Obts 4657		I.M. Makata
14. Laura Nakatani	119 N. Peyton St. Alex	$\dot{\lambda}$ f 1
15. Courtney Elwood	513 Buke St. Mexandera	vt Clalword
16. Lusan Tuttle	571 5 Lee 5t.	
17. RICHARD TROYER	3400 Holly SI Alex.VA	Jusan Ville
18. NAUCY GILBERT	1118 JANNOY'S LANE Alex 22302	- nonoy Gillet
19. Melane New		•
20. Juie Adams	109 Duke St	Melani New Juliadon
<b>9</b> 01	505 C restroad Dr	Guliador

We the undersigned oppose the construction of a visitor center on Market Square in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia:

NAME (print) ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip) SIGNATURE	
(1. VINCENT M. PALADÍNI III CAMONON MONS, ALORADONA	***************************************
2. DENISE T. ROGERS 9073 GILTINAN CT. Denise J. Rogers  2. LILDO 1 12 Carro 2 20 5 122153	_
3. 40 orgina Sayer 208 5.8t. AJapust	
4. Dave Weinstein 416 Gibbon St., Alexandria, UA 22314	
5. Bethany Weinstein 416 Gibbon St., Alexandria, VA 22314 Swinstein 416 Gibbon St., Alex, VA 22314 Swinslif 6. Elizaboth Schutz 709 S. Lee St. Alex, VA 20314 Eacheruf	
6., Elizabeth Schutz 709 S. Lee St. Alex, WA 20314 Eastehulf	
7. Tedelle Wordst P.O. Bex 473 Garrett Park, MD 20896	/
59/4 Mt 46(10 1) C. #1209 Donne X July	C
9. Hsa Cechi 539 Tonacco quay, Auxunana 22514 King Juli	
10. 13em King 2114 Rampart Dr. Alex, Va. S. Beth J 11. Sara Kadowaki 4505 Wynene ct Her 22315 8miles	\ \
10. Ben King 2114 Rampart Dr. Alex, Va. g. Beth 1 11. Sara Kadowaki 4505 Wynene ct Alex 22315 8 miles	low
12. Lot DUNN 418 So Lea St, alex 22314 MATTLE.	K
13. Ellen Stofan - 10 Box 335 Richerhum (A 20140) Ellen Stofa	·
02 144	
15. Jenny Seward 619 Bever JDR-22305 Jenny Sew	oud
16. RyunHardy 2+A C. Flore 1 AVE. 22314 Park June St. 104 Duke St 22314 Carl Steer	
18. Katherine Alrowe 2105 Paul Sps Plant 22308 Kalherine A Crown Alex	le
19. Kerl Keller 1018 Hmilton	
20. J. Burket 1109 Princille L. J. Bruky G	
Me, Va.	

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NAME (print)	ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip)	SIGNATURE
	1/20 Key Drive, 22302	Low e. W.
2. Pam musty	509 Canterbury Lane, 22314	for My my
3. Leslie Red	500 Wolfest. 22314	fre my me
4. Thomy Durden	6474 Deep & 1 1/2	7 0
5. (Rosa Westle Saver	Deepland	Ralli Ceuls
6. AFRICA HOSKEN	Springfield, 12151	grantist 1
7. John Double	Spitst and	Menner Daval
8. Zloise Vitizllo	6714 BRACKEN CT Spr. 2219	Jonne E. Daval
9. Stere Schmit	602N. OV9/00K Dt	Stohe
10. Camilla Ryall	905 franklin St.	Car. Da B. Nyll.
11. Alison avary 12. Susan Seport	1 2200 Windsor Rd.	Clisa Chary
12. Susan Seport	507 Summers Ct ALEX 6409 1655t.	SHJ-8
13. Lais M. Jenning Lois m. JENNING	2 6409 165 St.	Lie M. Jennys E. Benwett
14.	Alexandra	J. Bennott
15. Course Bennett	Blogandua	4
16. ERISTEN QUINLAW		10 Clil
17. Tracy Self	303 N. CAGOSTA, -	tags Sad
18. ALICIA McCASUL	J 313 WILLES ST.	
19. 1 Judy Fox	809 Chalfonte Fr	
20 20 0 1 0 5	. (	Jrox
20. Laren Snyder	Alexandra, Va 22314	
<b>4</b> ),	Alixandra, va 2244	,

We the undersigned oppose the construction of a visitor center on Market Square in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia:

NAME (print) ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip)	SIGNATURE
1. KATHERINE EUSWOMH 2141/2 N PAIRFAX >1 22314	KANLO
2. Mark Arm	3 1
3. Deh M Hen 8021 Fairfax Rd Alex Va	
*Circlembert Burnett 309 Franklin	Street Cle Burney
5. (Ullison MacMahon 2509 Lee Gaks C+ 302 Falls Chie	h VA alla - m
7 Usa De SII & Welson an	re of River 1
8. 1/2 DONNOWING 2065. P.49 SU. 1	PIRX W. 22316
9. Shelagh Roberts 1001 waynewood BIVD Alex	VA Sheloyn O Leads
10. ManeraBurasce: IFCE W. Abirgdon DRHIE. AlexVA	Marc
11. Hallie Smith 508 Queen 51-	Veluly
12. Jamie Smith 400, Stanlax St 9	Jansonty Vive Va 22030
13. 21 mer 3613 Hentry h. ta	
14. IAN SILVAR 2710 JAFFARSON DR GLAX	. V# 20307
15. Frances Byrom 10415 Carus Pl Char n	JC 28277
16 Parala Talexcup 4213, FairfaxSt UTCKAMON	VIA VII TO MASIC
17. Thiera Levy 419 Franklin St. Al	12314 Jexandria VA 22314
	Seelly Kedd
19. Baran Goodrum Union Street	Jorgh & yood
20. Lauro Moston 619 S Foisson	Laur marton
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NAME (print)	ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip) SIGNATURE
1. Ben Doffett	649 S. Wash, St. Mer, M.
2. JACKHNOREWS 22	208 Harpoon DR. Stafford YA Josho, Cinh
3. Deanna ANDREWS 2:	208 Harpoon DR. Stafford VA Volume Stafford VA Volume Stafford VA Volume Stafford VA
4 LONG BRITTINGHAM	FREDERICUS BURG VA 22407 Cultur Com
5. Sadus	11 Sheryl Sanders
6. Judy J. Fisher	4135 Everguen Dr Fairfax, Ve. Judy ) Fisher
7. Kay t. leatt	361 W 21 it St. Apt. 2R New York NY 1004 Kan L. Pret
8. / vy Whitlatch	700 Che tworth Pl. Alex. VA 22314 Sugarthatal
9. Phy R. Bevan	118 Ear malore stud, chey chouse, mil 2000 pluy Mg
10 Paul 13. Essex	4215 Woodb ory St, thyallaville, MO20182 D. DIJy
11. John M. Essex	4215 Woodberry St University Park MM 20782 All Sp
12. David Allen	4215 Woodberry St University Park IM) 20782 AMISSON 5839 N 20 4 97 Aclington VA 2220
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NAME (print)	ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip)	SIGNATURE
1. Stephania DIMond		M-RT TO
2. jennifer Seymore	712 S. P.H St. 22314	12
3. hristne Martin	15 Hally wood are Niov 1)	Trace Virial Ma
4. Milia Schman	, 2901 Holly SA. Alex.	NA 223058/1148/m
5. Natasha Nalas	2121 Columbia Dik And	1,4,22204 VALLA
6. Marie Jurenia di	ours 4500 W Bu Llatel	chick UT. Michel
7. Roment Silver	ouis 4507 W Brendoct Rd strice 211 N Columbus SV	Alen Va R Silverson
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NAME (print)	ADDRESS (street/apt. #, zip)	SIGNATURE/
1. CASEY Kane	5371 Duc H. #919 22304	/ May Cau
2. SHENGRASS	3207 Collard St 22306	Oller Gross
	aini Eikton In LASUT	
4. Pright	8567 Southlaun Ct 22309	Strat
5. P. Jane Stevens	3770 Keller Ave. 22302	Jane there
6. Alion Lery	3770 Keller Ase. 22302 2000 Washington Ave 20910	Clusa Ferry
$\sim$	1 . 0	1 11 11 11 11
8. Alana Hurley	8522 Towne Manor Ct	Marallalt
9. May De lor	SSDD Towns Manor Ct wf Olex VA 22309 104 E. Lucay Avr.	
10. The Delow	104 E. Lucay Ave.  No Aber 22331  No 134 E. Larry Ave.	Max lund
11. John J. Patrick	13A East Oak St 22301	Ala Felomet
12.	- Last Cak of 22301	John Statrick
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1. 1. 12 / 12 / 12 / 12 / 12 / 12 / 12 /	W. 14 613 S. No. por 5	Minthe way
2. Shown Dogs	shericulary & a	Ly Vo Show Die
3. Audrzy Baber	1701 Dewitt	G. M. Bilez,
4. Mark Erb	33 N. French St	Mark M El
	33N. muelist	
6. Pays me & Ru	10 8422 Crowney Pl Ale	y VA Cyrlys FR.C.
7. Clark Reis	d Grow Crowley Pl. He	Jacob Kink Vil
8. CATHETINE HAP	TEREN YOU MADISON O	lex Và Ctarle
9. MAKY F. W.fc	SN doo masison	JOEN JA
10 MYHALLE DVN	1 AK 801 N. P. H St. 1007_	1000
11. JOHN TROCHIN		
12. Jom Mile	sos s. torraix	00000
13. Deney Cu Ho	my 630 8. Dant sheyer	I have young
14. Lucy Johnson	Machel Vinace	Livey Wyllneson.
15. Ket Council	301 Priviletas Blud	furbille
16. Kenee Keynids	301 Prince tow Blud	Bene Beywld
17. RIGHARD W. Millo		Francis
18. C. Dale Duva		Oale Nor OC
19. James Xluvali	- 1502 S. Stafford Ce	were ilevall
20. Wilrah Out	a sis manufact	Sa (/s)
21. Bul Clase	SB Fronklish A	y War